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Edgar Wind's 'Intellectual Tragedy'

Bernardino Branca and Fabio Tononi

The seventh issue of *The Edgar Wind Journal* is divided into two parts. The first part includes three articles by Jaynie Anderson, Peter Burke, and Oswyn Murray, who reflect on their encounters with Edgar Wind and the reception of Wind's thought. Anderson was examined by Wind on the occasion of her Rhodes Fellowship, whereas Burke and Murray attended Wind's lectures as undergraduates. These three articles originate from the presentations these scholars gave at the launch of the volume *Edgar Wind: Art and Embodiment* on 16 April 2024 at Trinity College, Oxford, where Wind was Professor of Art History from 1955 to 1967.¹

These three articles share two common threads: the important role Wind has had in art historiography and cultural history scholarship and how he has inspired the three authors throughout their lives. For example, Anderson reflects on her experience being examined by Wind for her Rhodes Fellowship in 1969 and the impact of Wind's works on her intellectual career. Among other things, Anderson is known for her role as an editor of Wind's writings and for promoting his work over the years.²

Burke discusses Wind's years in England in the context of the Great Exodus of Central European scholars in the 1930s following Hitler's rise to power. Burke notes that European scholars who emigrated to Britain during this period played an important role in the study of sociology and art history. As Burke states, both disciplines were new to Britain. Exiled scholars provided a profound intellectual renewal in Britain and the other countries where they settled, to the extent that they became mediators between the academic culture of their homeland and that of their 'host land'. Prominent examples of exiled scholars who played a pivotal role in art history and cultural studies are Erwin Panofsky, who emigrated to the United States, and Wind, Rudolf Wittkower, and Ernst Gombrich, who emigrated to England. The importance of their contributions lies in having disseminated internationally the iconographic and iconological study of images and, more generally, the notion of *Kulturwissenschaft*. In this respect, Wind was particularly interested in connecting ideas and imagery in Renaissance culture. In doing so, he clashed

¹ Jaynie Anderson, Bernardino Branca, and Fabio Tononi (eds), *Edgar Wind: Art and Embodiment* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2024).

² See, for example, Edgar Wind, *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); and Edgar Wind, *Hume and the Heroic Portrait: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Imagery*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). See also Fabio Tononi, 'Festschrift in Honour of Jaynie Anderson', *The Edgar Wind Journal*, 6 (2024), 1–34.

with the contemporary positivist approach to art history in the English-speaking world, which, as Panofsky explained, was wary of Wind's connection.³

Murray reflects on the notion of classical and Renaissance encyclopaedism, which Wind and Aby Warburg saw as a way of finding a cultural meaning embedded in the ordering of knowledge. In this idea, Murray says, lay the future of any reference work created in the Warburgian tradition, which stood in stark contrast to the conventional 'alphabetical' approach followed during Wind's time in Oxford. According to Murray, in the collection of essays contained in the book *Edgar Wind: Art and Embodiment*, it is possible to implicitly read 'an intellectual tragedy', that is, an unresolved conflict between English positivism and continental idealism. This intellectual tragedy, Murray claims, is now being healed by a new generation of scholars who base their research on the Windian and Warburgian tradition of studies and have their point of reference in *The Edgar Wind Journal* and *Engramma*.

In the second part of this issue, Erminald Bertel examines Botticelli's mythological paintings, providing an example of how the iconological approach to art history can help resolve a knot in the interpretation of Botticelli's *Primavera*. Bertel argues that accepting the possibility of a double meaning in Botticelli's mythological paintings may resolve the inconsistencies between different interpretations and at the same time confirm the intuition of early art historians such as Warburg and Emil Jacobsen.

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³ Erwin Panofsky, 'The History of Art', in *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America*, ed. by William Rex Crawford (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), pp. 82–111 (82).